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Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ISO-00 OMB-01 NEA-10 AID-20 IO-13

CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10

PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-15 USIA-15 ACDA-19

DRC-01 /175 W
---------- 112358
R 171055Z SEP 73
FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6631
INFO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MANILA
AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE
AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH
AMEMBASSY SAIGON
CINCPAC

S E C R E T BANGKOK 14522

FOR ACTING SECRETARY RUSH FROM AMBASSADOR UNGER

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MARR, SEATO
SUBJECT: SEATO: 18TH COUNCIL MEETING

REF: A. BANGKOK 14359 B. BANGKOK 14455

1. IN ANTICIPATION OF SEATO COUNCIL MEETING LATER THIS MONTH,
IT MAY BE USEFUL FOR ME TO STATE OUR GOALS FOR THAT MEETING AS I
SEE THEM FROM HERE, AND TO MENTION WHAT I ANTICIPATE TO BE POSI-
TIONS OF OTHER COUNCIL MEMBERS WITH WHOM YOU WILL BE MEETING.
RECOGNIZE THAT ON BROADER POLICY QUESTIONS IN WASHINGTON YOU WILL
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HAVE GREATER INSIGHT THAN WE. FURTHERMORE, EMBASSIES AT OTHER SEATO

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CAPITALS MAY WISH TO COMMENT OR MAKE ADDITIONS ON WHAT FOLLOWS.

2. THIS COUNCIL MEETING COMES AFTER A LONGER THAN USUAL GAP BETWEEN MEETINGS AND FOLLOWS MUCH PUBLIC DISCUSSION WHICH HAS TENDED TO DENIGRATE SEATO AND SUGGEST IT HAS OUTLIVED ITS USEFULNESS. IMPORTANT OBJECTIVE OF COMING MEETING, THEREFORE, IS TO DEMONSTRATE, FOR BENEFIT OF REGIONAL MEMBERS AND PARTICULARLY THAILAND, THAT SEATO CONTINUES TO RECEIVE SUPPORT OF THEIR ALLIES, ABOVE ALL U.S., AND THAT WHATEVER MODIFICATIONS AND REDUCTIONS ARE FORESEEN FOR ORGANIZATION AND ITS ACTIVITIES, SECURITY COMMITMENT CONTAINED IN TREATY STANDS.

3. THE SECOND TASK FOR COMING MEETING IS TO TAKE ACCOUNT OF SEVERAL SIGNIFICANT CHANGES IN INTERNATIONAL SITUATION. THESE INCLUDE OPENING OF COMMUNICATIONS, PARTICULARLY BETWEEN U.S. AND PRC, AND SETTLEMENTS IN VIETNAM AND LAOS (AND HOPEFULLY CAMBODIA IN DUE COURSE). THESE DEVELOPMENTS HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO SOME REDUCTION IN MILITARY ACTION IN TREATY AREA AND AT LEAST AN ATMOSPHERE OF DETENTE, WHETHER OR NOT JUSTIFIED BY ALL THE FACTS. ALSO, AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND HAVE ELECTED GOVERNMENTS UNDER LABOR LEADERSHIP, WHICH FOR MANY YEARS NOW HAVE INCREASINGLY QUESTIONED WISDOM AND UTILITY OF RETAINING SEATO. FURTHERMORE, PAKISTAN HAS WITHDRAWN FROM ORGANIZATION AND FRANCE HAS REDUCED ITS PARTICIPATION ALMOST TO VANISHING POINT. WITH ALL THIS IN MIND, MODIFICATION OF STRUCTURE OF ORGANIZATION AND ITS ACTIVITIES HAS BEEN AGREED TO BE NECESSARY, AND PRINCIPAL TASK OF COMING MEETING WILL BE TO REVIEW AND ADOPT A SET OF PROPOSALS DESIGNED TO ACCOMPLISH THIS. MODIFICATIONS ENTAIL REDUCTION OF EMPHASIS ON MILITARY ACTIVITIES, LOWER PUBLIC PROFILE FOR SEATO, AND PARING DOWN BOTH STAFF AND ACTIFITIES TO REMOVE REDUNDANCIES EVIDENT FOR SOME TIME.

4. COUNCIL MEETING, ON OTHER HAND, SHOULD PROJECT FOR PERIOD AHEAD A SEATO PROGRAM WHICH HAS VALUE AND PERTINENCE TO TODAY'S SITUATION, AND WHICH WILL BE RECEIVING ADEQUATE SUPPORT FROM MEMBER COUNTRIES. THIS MEANS EMPHASIS ABOVE ALL ON ADVICE AND SUPPORT TO THAILAND'S AND THE PHILIPPINES' EFFORTS THROUGH COUNTER-INSURGENCY PROGRAMS AND OTHERWISE TO ACHIEVE INTERNAL SECURITY AND STABILITY, WITH EMPHASIS ON MODEST BUT PERTINENT SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC PROJECTS.

5. DESPITE EARLIER RESISTANCE AND RELUCTANCE, THAILAND AND

PHILIPPINES HAVE ACCEPTED VIRTUALLY ALL THE MODIFICATIONS IN SEATO ORGANIZATION AND ACTIVITIES WHICH COUNCIL WILL BE ASKED TO ENDORSE. TO THAIS PARTICULARLY, IT IS IMPORTANT THAT NOTHING BE SAID TO IMPLY AN UNDERMINING OR DOWNGRADING OF MILITARY PLANS ALREADY ON THE BOOKS OR OF SECURITY COMMITMENT IN TREATY ITSELF. BOTH COUNTRIES ALSO DESIRE SIGNIFICANT INCREASE IN ASSISTANCE UNDER COUNTER-INSURGENCY AND ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT RUBRICS. HOWEVER, BELIEVE THEY ARE WELL AWARE THAT AN INCREASED SEATO BUDGET IS NOT

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"IN THE CARDS" AND ANY INCREASED SEATO ASSISTANCE IN THESE FIELDS
WOULD HAVE TO RESULT FROM RE-ALLOCATION OF PRESENT-LEVEL RESOURCES
IN COMING FISCAL YEARS. (IT IS FOR THIS REASON THAT WE HAVE BEEN
FOREMOST AMONG MEMBERS IN REDUCING SEATO STAFF.)

6. AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND WOULD HAPPILY HAVE CUT EVEN FURTHER
INTO MILITARY SIDE OF SEATO. GIVEN STRONG FEELINGS IN BOTH THEIR
LABOR PARTIES, THEY FEEL OBLIGED TO MAKE CLEAR AT HOME THAT SEATO,
ALTHOUGH THEY CONTINUE TO ADHERE TO IT, HAS BEEN BASICALLY REVAMPED
AND HAS GIVEN UP OBJECTIONABLE FEATURES FROM PAST, PARTICUGARLY
ANY FURTHER MILITARY PLANNING. AT SAME TIME, BOTH GOVERNMENTS
ATTACH ENOUGH IMPORTANCE TO THEIR RELATIONS WITH REGIONAL COUNTRIES,
AND THAILAND IN PARTICULAR (GIVEN IMPORTANCE OF SEATO TO THAILAND),
THAT THEY ACCEPT IMPORTANCE OF PRESERVING SEATO, EVEN REDUCED,
AND THEY ARE ALSO CONTENT WITH EMPHASIS ON INTERNAL STABILITY
AND ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT.

7. ROLE OF U.S. AND U.K. HAS BEEN IN LARGE PART TO ASSURE THAT WE
KEEP ENOUGH OF SEATO TO REASSURE REGIONAL MEMBERS WHILE ACCEPTING
MODIFICATIONS WHICH AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND -- AND IN MANY CASES
U.S. AND TO LESSER EXTENT U.K., FOR THAT MATTER -- CONSIDER ESSEN-
TIAL.

8. OUTLOOK FOR MEETING CURRENTLY APPEARS GOOD WITH ONLY REMAINING
UNAGREED POINTS REVOLVING AROUND PRESS RELEASE TO BE ISSUED AT
CLOSE OF MEETING. WHILE REORGANIZATION PLAN HAS DEVISED SATISFAC-
TORY COMPROMISE LANGUAGE ON MILITARY DOWNGRADING, WHICH INCLUDES
SHELVING OF EXISTING MILITARY PLANS AND ADJOURNING FURTHER PLAN-
NING, TREATMENT OF THIS ISSUE IN PRESS RELEASE STILL UNSETTLED. WE
HAVE SOUGHT TO AVOID ANY MENTION OF MILITARY PLANNING IN THE RELEASE
AND PREFER TO REFER ONLY TO "REDUCTION OF SEATO'S TRADITIONAL MILI-
TARY ACTIVITIES" (REF A). APPEARS THIS WILL PROBABLY BE GENERALLY
ACCEPTABLE, BUT AUSTRALIANS AND NEW ZEALANDERS MAY FEEL OBLIGED
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TO COMMENT UNILATERALLY FOLLOWING MEETING TO ASSURE THEIR PUBLIC
THAT MILITARY PLANNING IS AT AN END. THERE IS ALSO PECULIAR TWIST
IN AUSTRALIAN THINKING WHICH MAY APPEAR IN DISCUSSIONS OF PRESS
RELEASE OR ELSEWHERE, NAMELY THEIR DESIRE TO AVOID ANY REFERENCE TO
"REDUCED THREAT" OR "IMPROVED SECURITY" IN THE TREATY AREA. THEY
TAKE POSITION THAT CHANGES IN SEATO ARE NOT BEING MADE BECAUSE OF
CHANGES IN INTERNATIONAL SITUATION MENTIONED ABOVE BUT RATHER
BECAUSE SEATO'S EARLER OUTLOOK, MUCH OF ITS ORGANIZATION, AND MANY
OF ITS ACTIVITIES WERE WRONG IN THE FIRST PLACE.
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